

**Troilus and
Criseyde.
Liber I.**

So whan this Calkas knew by calculinge,
And eek by answeere of this Appollo,
That Grekes sholden swich a peple bringe,
Thorugh which that Troye moste been fordo,
He caste anon out of the toun to go;
for wel wiste he, by sort, that Troye sholde
Destroyed been, ye, wolde whoso nolde.

for which, for to departen softly
Took purpos ful this forknowinge wyse,
And to the Grekes ost ful prively
He stal anon; and they, in curteys wyse,
Him deden bothe worship and servyse,
In trust that he hath conning hem to rede
In every peril which that is to drede.

The noyse up roos, whan it was first aspyed,
Thorugh al the toun, and generally was spoken,
That Calkas traytor fled was, and allyed
With hem of Grece; and casten to ben wroken
On him that falsly hadde his feith so broken;
And seyden, he and al his kin at ones
Ben worthy for to brennen, fel and bones.

Now hadde Calkas left, in this meschaunce,
Hunwist of this false and wikked dede,
His doughter, which that was in gret penaunce,
for of hir lyf she was ful sore in drede,
As she that niste what was best to rede;
for bothe a widowe was she, and allone
Of any freend, to whom she dorste hir mone.

Criseyde was this lady name aright;
As to my dome, in al Troyes citee
Nas noon so fair, for passing every wight
So aungellyk was hir natyf beautee,
That lyk a thing immortal semed she,
As doth an hevenish parfit creature,
That down were sent in scorning of nature.

This lady, which that alday herde at ere
Hir fadres shame, his falsnesse and tresoun,
Wel nigh out of hir wit for sorwe and fere,
In widewes habit large of samit broun,
On knees she fil biforn Ector adoun;
With pitous voys, and tendrely wepinge,
His mercy bad, hirselves excusinge.

Now was this Ector pitous of nature,
And saw that she was sorwfully bigoon,
And that she was so fair a creature;
Of his goodnesse he gladed hir anon,
And seyde: Lat your fadres tresoun goon
forth with mischaunce, and ye yourself, in joye,
Dwellet with us, whyl you good list, in Troye.

And al thonour that men may doon yow have,
As ferforth as your fader dwelled here,
Ye shul han, and your body shal men save,
As fer as I may ought enquire or here.
And she him thonked with ful humble chere,
And ofter wolde, and it hadde ben his wille,
And took hir leve, and hoom, and held hir stille.

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And in hir hous she abood with swich meynne
As to hir honour nede was to holde;
And whyl she was dwellinge in that citee,
Kepte hir estat, and bothe of yonge and olde
ful wel beloved, and wel men of hir tolde.
But whether that she children hadde or noon,
I rede it nought; therefore I lete it goon.

The thinges fellen, as they doon of werre,
Bitwixen hem of Troye and Grekes ofte;
for som day boughten they of Troye it derre,
And eft the Grekes founden no thing softe
The folk of Troye; and thus fortune onlofte,
And under eft, gan hem to wheelen bothe
After hir cours, ay whyl they were wrothe.

But how this toun com to destruccioun
Ne falleth nought to purpos me to telle;
for it were here a long digressioun
fro my matere, and yow to longe dwelle.
But the Troyane gestes, as they felle,
In Omer, or in Dares, or in Dytte,
Whoso that can, may rede hem as they wryte.

But though that Grekes hem of Troye shetten,
And hir citee bisegede al aboute,
Hir olde usage wolde they not letten,
As for to honour hir goddess ful devoute;
But aldermost in honour, out of doute,
They hadde a relik hight Palladion,
That was hir trist aboven everichon.

And so bifel, whan comen was the tyme
Of Aperl, whan clothed is the mede
With newe grene, of lusty Ver the pryme,
And swote smellen floures whyte and rede,
In sondry wyses shewed, as I rede,
The folk of Troye hir observaunces olde,
Palladiones feste for to holde.

And to the temple, in al hir beste wyse,
In general, ther wente many a wight,
To herkennen of Palladion the servyse;
And namely, so many a lusty knight,
So many a lady fresh and mayden bright,
ful wel arrayed, bothe moste and leste,
Ye, bothe for the seson and the feste.

Among thise othere folk was Criseyde,
In widewes habite blak; but nathelees,
Right as our firste lettre is now an A,
In beautee first so stood she, makelees;
Hir godly looking gladede al the prees.
Nas never seyn thing to ben preyed derre,
Nor under cloude blak so bright a sterre.

As was Criseyde, as folk seyde everichoon
That hir bihelden in hir blake wede;
And yet she stood ful lowe and stille alloon,
Bihidden othere folk, in litel brede,
And neigh the dore, ay under shames drede,
Simple of atyr, and debonaire of chere,
With ful assured loking and manere.

This Troilus, as he was wont to gyde
his yonge knightes, ladde hem up and down
In thilke large temple on every syde,
Biholding ay the ladies of the toun,
Now here, now there, for no devocioun
hadde he to noon, to reven him his reste,
But gan to preyse and lakken whom him leste.

And in his walk ful fast he gan to wayten
If knight or squyer of his companye
Gan for to syke, or lete his eyen bayten
On any woman that he coude aspye;
He wolde smyle, and holden it folye,
And seye him thus: God wot, she slepeth softe
for love of thee, whan thou tornest ful ofte!

I have herd told, pardieux, of your livinge,
Ye lovers, and your lewede observaunces,
And which a labour folk han in winninge
Of love, and, in the keping, which doutaunces;
And whan your preye is lost, wo and penaunces;
O verrey foles! nyce and blinde be ye;
Ther nis not oon can war by other be.

And with that word he gan caste up the browe,
Ascaunces: Lo! is this nought wysly spoken?
At which the god of love gan loken rowe
Right for despyt, and shoop for to ben wroken;
He kiddle anon his bowe nas nat broken;
for sodeynly he hit him at the fulle;
And yet as proud a pekok can he pulle.

O blinde world, O blinde entencioun!
How ofte falleth al the effect contraire
Of surquidrye and foul presumpcioun;
for caught is proud, and caught is debonaire.
This Troilus is clomben on the staire,
And litel weneth that he moot descenden.
But al day fayleth thing that foolles wenden.

As proude Bayard ginneth for to skippe
Out of the wey, so priketh him his corn,
Til he a lash have of the longe whippe,
Than thenketh he: Though I prauce al biforn
first in the trays, ful fat and newe shorn,
Yet am I but an hors, and horses lawe
I moot endure, and with my feres drawe.

So ferde it by this fers and proude knight;
Though he a worthy kinges sone were,
And wende nothing hadde had swiche might
Ayens his wil that sholde his herte stere,
Yet with a look his herte wex afere,
That he, that now was most in pryde above,
Wex sodeynly most subget unto love.

forthy ensample taketh of this man,
Ye wyse, proude, and worthy folkes alle,
To scornen Love, which that so sone can
The freedom of your hertes to him thralle;
for ever it was, and ever it shal bifalle,
That Love is he that alle thing may binde;
for may no man fordo the lawe of kindé.

That this be sooth, hath preved and doth yet;
for this trowe I ye knowen, alle or some,
Men reden not that folk han gretter wit
Than they that han be most with love ynome;
And strengest folk ben therwith overcome,
The worthiest and grettest of degree;
This was, and is, and yet men shal it see.

And trowelich it sit wel to be so;
for alderwysest han therwith ben plesed;
And they that han ben aldermost in wo,
With love han ben confortet most and esed;
And ofte it hath the cruel herte apesed,
And worthy folk maad worthier of name,
And causeth most to dreden vyce and shame.

Now sith it may not goodly be withstonde,
And is a thing so vertuous in kinde,
Refuseth not to Love for to be bonde,
Sin, as himselven list, he may yow binde.
The yerde is bet that bowen wole and winde
Than that that brest; and therfor I yow rede
To folwen him that so wel can yow lede.

But for to tellen forth in special
As of this kinges sone of which I tolde,
And leten other thing collateral,
Of him thenke I my tale for to holde,
Bothe of his joye, and of his cares colde;
And al his werk, as touching this matere,
for I it gan, I wil therto refere.

Withinne the temple he wente him forth pleyinge,
This Troilus, of every wight aboute,
On this lady and now on that lokinge,
Wherso she were of toun, or of withoute;
And upon cas bifel, that thorough a route
his eye perced, and so depe it wente,
Til on Criseyde it smoot, and ther it stente.

And sodeynly he wex therwith astoned,
And gan hire bet biholde in thrifty wyse:
O mercy, God! thoughte he, wher hastow woned,
That art so fair and goodly to devyse?
Therwith his herte gan to sprede and ryse,
And softe sighed, lest men mighte him here,
And caughte ayein his firste pleyinge chere.

She nas not with the leste of hir stature,
But alle hir limes so wel answeringe
Weren to womanhode, that creature
Was never lasse mannish in seminge.
And eek the pure wyse of here meninge
Shewede wel, that men might in hir gesse
Honour, estat, and wommanly noblesse.

To Troilus right wonder wel withalle
Gan for to lyke hir mening and hir chere,
Which somdel deynous was, for she leet falle
Hir look a lite aside, in swich manere,
Ascaunces: What! may I not stonden here?
And after that hir loking gan she lighte,
That never thoughte him seen so good a sighte.

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